

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) In a rotary slicing machine having a rotary impeller for carrying food products into cutting engagement with at least one slicing knife, said rotary impeller having a rotating throat wall defining an upwardly open inlet throat for inflow passage of a succession of food products to be cut, and an overlying supply chute through which food products are supplied to fall by gravity downwardly through said rotating inlet throat and into said impeller, the improvement comprising:

a plug prevention member extending at least partially into said rotating inlet throat at a location disposed substantially off-axis relative to an axis of rotation of said impeller, said rotary impeller being movable relative to said plug prevention member, and said plug prevention member being positioned for impact engagement by ~~whereby~~ food products lodged by centrifugal action against said rotating throat wall to dislodge such food products ~~are carried by said impeller into impact engagement with said plug prevention member and thereby dislodged~~ from said throat wall and thereby permit such food products to fall downwardly into said impeller for cutting;

said plug prevention member being provided as a component separate from and in addition to the overlying supply chute.

2. (original) The improvement of claim 1 wherein said plug prevention member comprises an elongated rod.

3. (original) The improvement of claim 2 wherein said rod extends generally parallel to a rotational axis of said rotary impeller.

4. (original) The improvement of claim 2 including means for supporting said rod generally above said rotary impeller with a lower end of said rod extending downwardly into said inlet throat.

5. (original) The improvement of claim 4 wherein said rod supporting means is adjustable.

6. (original) The improvement of claim 4 wherein said rod is removably supported by said rod supporting means.

7. (original) The improvement of claim 1 wherein said plug prevention member is stationary.

8. (original) The improvement of claim 1 wherein said plug prevention member extends at least partially into said inlet throat at a location spaced from said throat wall by a distance substantially less than a narrow dimension of said food product.

9. (original) The improvement of claim 1 wherein the food products comprise potatoes.

10. (currently amended) In a rotary slicing machine having a rotary impeller for carrying food products into cutting engagement with at least one slicing knife, said rotary impeller having a rotating throat wall defining an upwardly open inlet throat for inflow passage of a succession of food products to be cut, and an overlying supply chute through which food products are supplied to fall by gravity downwardly through said rotating inlet throat and into said impeller, the improvement comprising:

a stationary plug prevention rod having a lower end extending downwardly at least partially into said rotating inlet throat, said rod being disposed substantially in parallel with and substantially off-axis relative to an axis of rotation of said impeller, and said plug prevention member being positioned for impact engagement by ~~whereby~~ food products lodged by centrifugal action against said rotating throat wall to dislodge such food products ~~are carried by said impeller into impact engagement with said plug prevention member and thereby dislodged~~ from said throat wall and thereby permit such food products to fall downwardly into said impeller for cutting;

said plug prevention member being provided as a component separate from and in addition to the overlying supply chute.

11. (original) The improvement of claim 10 wherein said plug prevention member extends at least partially into said inlet throat at a location spaced from said throat wall by a distance substantially less than a narrow dimension of said food product.

12. (currently amended) A rotary slicing machine, comprising:
a machine frame;

a rotary impeller carried on said frame for rotatable movement on a generally vertically oriented axis of rotation;

drive means for rotatably driving said rotary impeller;

knife means mounted generally at a periphery of said rotary impeller;

said rotary impeller including a central cavity and a throat wall defining an upwardly open rotating inlet throat for inflow passage of a succession of food products, whereby food products within said central cavity are carried radially outwardly by centrifugal force into slicing engagement with said knife means;

an overlying supply chute through which food products are supplied to fall by gravity downwardly through said rotating inlet throat and into said impeller;
and

plug prevention means disposed generally within said rotating inlet throat at a location relatively near to said throat wall and substantially off-axis relative to the axis of impeller rotation, said impeller being movable relative to said plug prevention means, said plug prevention member being positioned for impact engagement by whereby food products lodged by centrifugal action against said rotating throat wall to dislodge such food products are carried by said impeller into impact engagement with said plug prevention means and thereby dislodged from said throat wall and thereby permit such food products to fall downwardly into said impeller for cutting;

said plug prevention member being provided as a component separate from and in addition to the overlying supply chute.

13. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 12 wherein said plug prevention means comprises an elongated rod.

14. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 13 wherein said rod extends generally parallel to the rotational axis of said rotary impeller.

15. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 13 including means for supporting said rod generally above said rotary impeller with a lower end of said rod extending downwardly into said inlet throat.

16. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 14 wherein said rod supporting means is adjustable.

17. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 14 wherein said rod is removably supported by said rod supporting means.

18. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 12 wherein said plug prevention means is stationary.

19. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 12 wherein said plug prevention means extends at least partially into said inlet throat at a location spaced from said throat wall by a distance substantially less than a narrow dimension of said food product.

20. (original) The rotary slicing machine of claim 12 wherein the food products comprise potatoes.